

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6900

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 MASERU 0467

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, EAID, LT

SUBJECT: AN ANALYSIS OF U.S. POLICY OPTIONS FOR LESOTHO

1. SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE ATTEMPTS TO ANALYZE THREE POLICY OPTIONS FOR LESOTHO AVAILABLE TO USG. PRIOR TO THE ANALYSIS, A LISTING OF THE SUPPORTIVE AND INHIBITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AND PERCEPTUAL FACTORS WILL SET THE ANALYTIC FRAME OF REFERENCE. THREE OPTIONS WILL THEN BE PRESENTED AND ANALYZED. FINALLY, THE EMBASSY'S RECOMMENDED OPTION AND SUGGESTED COURSES OF ACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIOR TO COMMENCING AN ANALYSIS OF US POLICY OPTIONS FOR LESOTHO, A LISTING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS, AS WELL AS THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE US HELD BY BASOTHO, IS IN ORDER. THESE FACTORS HAVE BEEN DIVIDED INTO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CATEGORIES, THAT IS THOSE THAT TEND TO SUPPORT OR INHIBIT THE PURSUIT OF US POLICY, AND WILL SET THE FRAME OF REFERENCE FOR THE ANALYSIS.

3. SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:

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A. GOL IS A MODERATE, EVEN CONSERVATIVE, GOVERNMENT IN A REGION THAT IS BECOMING MORE RADICAL.

B. JUST TO SURVIVE, GOL WILL NEED CONTINUING TECHNICAL AND MATERIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE US AND OTHER WESTERN AID DONORS FOR THE INDEFINITE FUTURE.

C. GOL MAINTAINS RELATIVELY CLOSE CONTACT WITH MODERATE BLACK LEADERS IN THE RSA, SUCH AS CHURCH AND HOMELAND LEADERS.

D. IF THE ISSUE DOES NOT PLACE IT IN OPPOSITION TO THE OAU OR NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, GOL GENUINELY ATTEMPTS TO BE RESPONSIVE TO US INITIATIVES IN MULTILATERAL FORA.

4. INHIBITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:

AA. LESOTHO HAS NO BASE INDEPENDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA UPON WHICH TO DEVELOP ECONOMICALLY; NATURAL RESOURCES ARE NEGLIGIBLE; THE SMALL PERCENTAGE OF ARABLE LAND IS POOR AND ERODING; THE POPULATION/LAND RATIO IS DETERIORATING; TRAINED MANPOWER IS SCARCE; AND THE ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE IS EITHER PRIMITIVE OR NON-EXISTENT.

B. THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IN LESOTHO IS UNREPRESENTATIVE AND UNPOPULAR, THOUGH NOT UNDULY REPRESSIVE, EXCEPT WHEN ITS AUTHORITY IS CHALLENGED, E.G. 1970 AND 1974.

C. THE STRONG-MAN NATURE OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT BODES ILL FOR A PEACEFUL TRANSITION OF POWER WHEN THE PRESENT PRIME MINISTER DEPARTS THE SCENE. IN A STRUGGLE FOR POWER, POLICE SUPPORT IS LIKELY TO BE THE CRITICAL FACTOR.

D. GOL'S INFLUENCE WITH BOTH THE BLACK RADICALS AND WHITE REACTIONARIES OF SOUTH AFRICA IS MINIMAL. WHITES VIEW GOL AS A PETTY BLACK-RULED DICTATORSHIP WORTHY ONLY OF THEIR CONTEMPT, WHILE BLACK RADICALS ARE GENERALLY DISDAINFUL OF GOL, CONSIDERING IT LITTLE BETTER THAN A HOMELAND GOVERNMENT. IN  
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ADDITION GOL-SAG POLITICAL RELATIONS HAVE DETERIORATED SINCE TRANSKEI INDEPENDENCE.

5. SUPPORTIVE PERCEPTIONS:

A. THERE IS GENUINE APPRECIATION OF LONG-STANDING US SUPPORT AND PRESENCE BY SENIOR GOL OFFICIALS. ESPECIALLY APPRECIATED WAS US SUPPORT DURING LATE 1976 UNSC MEETING ON THE GOL COMPLAINT AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA OVER THE CREATION OF THE TRANSKEI AND THE ENSUING BORDER PROBLEM.

B. BELIEF THAT US IS ONLY MAJOR POWER WHICH CAN DECISIVELY INFLUENCE THE PACE AND DIRECTION OF CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA. GOL LOOKS TO THE US AS A GUARANTOR OF SORTS AND SOURCE OF ASSISTANCE TO REDUCE LESOTHO'S DEPENDENCE ON RSA.

C. US IS A KNOWN QUANTITY. WHILE CONTACT WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES MAY SEEM DESIRABLE TO GOL, THEY ARE LARGELY UNKNOWN. US, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS WELL KNOWN TO GOL OFFICIALS (MANY WERE

TRAINED IN NORTH AMERICA). LENGTHY INTERACTION HAS LED TO MANY DEEP AND LASTING FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN LESOTHO AND AMERICANS.

D. ACCEPTANCE AND INTEGRATION OF US CULTURAL NORMS BY VARIOUS LEVELS OF LESOTHO'S SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG, COUPLED WITH A WIDESPREAD RESPECT FOR US POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS, PROVIDE AN AMENABLE MILEIU FOR US POLICY.

E. MOST SENIOR GOL OFFICIALS ARE CONSERVATIVE, TRADITIONAL AND PRO-WESTERN. MANY ARE DEVOUT CHRISTIANS. THEY FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE PHILOSOPHICALLY WITH WESTERNERS RATHER THAN COMMUNISTS. THEY FEAR THAT THE RAPID AND DESTABILIZING CHANGES AVOCATED BY RADICALS WOULD REDOUND TO THE DISTRESS OF GOL.

6. INHIBITING PERCEPTIONS:

A. WIDESPREAD BELIEF (HOWEVER INACCURATE) AMONG THE YOUNGER  
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LEADERSHIP THAT THE US SUPPORTS, OR AT LEAST ACCEPTS, THE STATUS QUO IN SOUTH AFRICA. IN SUPPORT OF THIS BELIEF YOUNG LEADERS POINT TO THE FOLLOWING AS SYMPTOMATIC OF BASIC US DESIRE TO MAINTAIN STATUS QUO.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 MASERU 0467

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- 1) HEAVY US INVESTMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA.
- 2) ALLEGED US TENDENCY TO VIEW SOUTH AFRICAN PROBLEMS IN CONTEXT OF EAST-WEST STRUGGLE, RATER THAN LIBERATION CONTEXT.
- 3) ALLEGED US CONCERN FOR (WHITE) MINORITY RIGHTS WHILE (BLACK) MAJORITY STILL LANGUISHES UNDER REPRESSIVE MINORITY RULE.

B. ALLEGES US INDIFFERENCE TO GOL'S ADVICE AND ITS LEGITIMATE INTERESTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. MANY GOL OFFICIALS FEEL THAT THE US, IN FORMULATING ITS SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLICIES, IGNORES THE EXPERIENCE COUNSEL GOL COULD OFFER ON THE SAG LEADERSHIP AND ITS PROBABLE COURSES OF ACTION. FURTHER, MANY YOUNGER GOL OFFICIALS BELIEVE THEIR LEGITIMATE CONCERNS (ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, SAG DOMINANCE OF LESOTHO) AND INTERESTS (SELF-SUFFICIENCY, ELIMINATION OF APARTHEID) ARE GOING UNHEEDED BY US POLICY -MAKERS.

C. THERE IS A RELATIVELY WIDESPREAD BELIEF AMONG YOUNG AND CERTAIN OLDER GOL OFFICIALS THAT LESOTHO'S INTERESTS AND ASPIRATIONS ARE BEST SERVED BY SOLIDARITY WITH THE OAU AND THE

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NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT.

D. A SMALL BUT INFLUENTIAL FACTION WITHIN GOL BELIEVES THAT LESOTHO SHOULD BROADEN ITS POLITICAL HORIZON BY DEVELOPING CLOSER RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST-RULED COUNTRIES. THEY ARGUE THAT RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES WOULD ENHANCE LESOTHO'S CREDIBILITY WITH THE THIRD WORLD AND POSSIBLY DIVERSIFY ITS AID SOURCES.

E. KNOWN GOL SENSITIVITY TO CRITICISM OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE COUPLED WITH THE INCREASING US EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS COULD LEAD TO FRICTION IN US-GOL RELATIONS.

7. THE ABOVE SUPPORTIVE AND INHIBITIVE FACTORS SET THE FRAME OF REFERENCE, OR CONSTRAINTS WITHIN WHICH THIS ANALYSIS WILL PROCEED. BEFORE PROCEEDING, HOWEVER, THIS ANALYSIS IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING ASSUMPTION: THE ONLY VALID BASES FOR US INTEREST IN LESOTHO ARE:

- 1) LESOTHO'S UNIQUE GEO-POLITICAL POSITION IN THE HEART OF SOUTH AFRICA, AND 2) ITS POTENTIAL INFLUENCE OR INSIGHT INTO CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA. THAT IS TO SAY THAT LESOTHO IN AND OF ITSELF IS OF NO REAL INTEREST TO THE US, BUT RATHER ITS RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCE WITH THE WHOLE REGION MAKES IT PART OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN EQUATION AND THEREFORE OF INTEREST.

8. THE POLICY OPTIONS BELOW CAN BEST BE CHARACTERIZED BY THE DEGREE OF US COMMITMENT, INVOLVEMENT AND COST, RANGING FROM CONSIDERABLE TO NEGLIGIBLE. IN OUR RELATIONS WITH LESOTHO, THE US IS IN A RELATIVELY UNUSUAL POSITION OF BEING ABLE TO CHOOSE FROM A FULL RANGE OF POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES.

9. OPTION I:

A. IT IS IN THE US INTEREST TO ASSIST LESOTHO TO REMAIN AN EXAMPLE OF A STABLE, MODERATE, BLACK-RULED STATE, WHICH CAN BE CONFIDENTIAL

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OFFERED AS A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO ALLAY THE FEARS OF CHANGE AMONG THE WHITE MINORITY IN SOUTH AFRICA.

D. IT IS IN US INTEREST TO UTILIZE GOL INSIGHTS AND CONTACT WITH PRETORIA AND BLACK LIBERATION GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA TO MODERATE THE PACE AND DIRECTION OF CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

C. IT IS IN US INTEREST TO MAKE ALL NECESSARY ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INPUTS TO ASSURE THE SURVIVAL OF LESOTHO TO ACCOMPLISH A AND B.

OPTION I WOULD ENTAIL RELATIVELY HEAVY COSTS IN ECONOMIC AID AND POLITICAL COMMITMENTS TO AN UNPOPULAR AND UNREPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. GOL HAS MINIMAL INFLUENCE WITH THE TWO MAJOR ANTAGONISTS (WHITE REACTIONARIES AND BLACK RADICALS). IN SOUTH AFRICA. THE REPRESSIVE ACTIONS OF GOL DURING THE 1970 AND 1974 CRISES CANNOT BE ERASED AND TEND TO UNDERMINE THE CREDIBILITY OF LESOTHO AS AN EXAMPLE OF A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO WHITE RULE IN SOUTH AFRICA. THEREFORE THE COSTS OF OPTION 1 WOULD SEEM TO OUTWEIGH THE LIKELY BENEFITS.

10. OPTION II:

A. LESOTHO IS OF NO REAL POLITICAL INTEREST TO THE US.

B. A LIMITED AMOUNT OF AID ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS COULD BE JUSTIFIED TO MAINTAIN A MODICUM OF GOODWILL TOWARD THE US AND SHOW OUR CONCERN FOR ONE OF THE WORLD'S POOREST COUNTRIES. OPTION II WOULD PRECLUDE AN EFFECTIVE US INFLUENCE WITH GOL, THROUGH THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS WOULD BE MINIMAL. THE SUBSEQUENT VACUUM CREATED, HOWEVER, COULD INVITE INCREASING COMMUNIST INFLUENCE. POSSIBLE USSR AND/OR PRC PRESENCE COULD INJECT INCREASED DESTABILIZATION INTO THE HEART OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE DETRIMENT OF US INTERESTS IN THE REGION. THEREFORE, OPTION II RISKS THE CREATION OF A COMMUNIST FOOTHOLD IN AN AREA OF HIGH US INTEREST.

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11. OPTION III: IT VS IN THE US INTEREST:

A. TO EXPLOIT THE POSSIBLE USEFULNESS OF GOL AS A VEHICLE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE US AND MODERATE BLACK LEADERS IN RSA AND AS A SOURCE OF INSIGHTS INTO THE MOTIVATIONS OF WHITE AND BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS, FORCES AT PLAY AND LIKELY EVOLUTION OF EVENT.

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B. TO DENY LESOTHO AS A BASE FOR FURTHER COMMUNIST INROADS WITHIN SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGION.

C. TO SEEK GOL SUPPORT IN MULTILATERAL FORA ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO US.

D. TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE LEVELS OF ECONOMIC AID TO MAINTAIN MODERATE,, NON-RACIAL, PRO-WESTERN STANCE OF GOL,SO THAT US CAN PURSUE INTERESTS A-C.

OPTION III SEEMS TO BE THE BEST ALTERNATIVE. IT RECOGNIZES

THE GOL'S MINIMAL INFLUENCE AND OTHER HANDICAPS WITHIN REGION. IT MAINTAINS, AT A REASONABLE LEVEL,; US CONCERN AND ASSISTANCE FOR LESOTHO, WHILE DENYING THE COMMUNISTS ACCESS. IT EXPLOITS REASONABLE POSSIBILITY OF UTILIZING GOL'S LIMITED INFLUENCE FOR US BENEFIT AS THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN SITUATION UNFOLDS. FINALLY, IT ACCEPTS THAT THE MAJOR US RESOURCE COMMITMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA MUST BE CONCENTRATED IN THE RSA, ZIMBABWE, NAMIBIA AND OTHER PRIORITY AREAS WHERE US INTERESTS ARE MUCH GREATER.

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12. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT OPTION III IS THE MOST RATIONAL AND RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING COURSES OF ACTION:

A. US, IN RESPONSE TO UNSC RESOLUTION 402, SHOULD CONSTRUCT MAJOR ROAD FROM MOHALES HOEK TO MPITI. US WILL BENEFIT FROM GOOD WILL GENERATED BY THIS MAJOR AID INPUT, WHILE TACTFULLY RESISTING GOL PRESSURES FOR GREATER INVOLVEMENT (APART FROM TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE), UNTIL THIS PROJECT IS COMPLETED. THE ROAD SHOULD COST AN AVERAGE OF \$5 MILLION PER YEAR FOR FOUR YEARS.

B. ACCEPT FACT THAT LESOTHO IS NOT ECONOMICALLY VIABLE EXCEPT IN ASSOCIATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA, WHETHER THE WHITE MINORITY OR THE BLACK MAJORITY HOLD SWAY. BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE MODEST AID

INPUTS TO ASSURE LESOTHO'S SURVIVAL FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, WHILE WHITE MINORITY-RULE PREVAILS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND DURING PERIOD OF EVENTUAL CHANGE TO A FRIENDLY BLACK MAJORITY GOVERNMENT THERE.

C. TACTFULLY ENCOURAGE EVOLUTION TOWARDS A MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, BUT REALIZE IT IS NOT AN IMMEDIATE PROBABILITY.

D. MAKE TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS TO GOL ON MULTI-LATERAL ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO US. HOWEVER, EXPECT SUPPORT ONLY ON THOSE ISSUES WHICH ARE NON-CONTROVERSIAL OR WHICH DO NOT PLACE GOL IN POSITION OF OPPOSING OVERWHELMING OAU OR NON-ALIGN MAJORITY.

E. QUIETLY ENCOURAGE GOL TO STRENGTHEN ITS CONTACTS WITH MODERATE BLACK LEADERS IN THE RSA. US MAY FIND THESE CONTACTS USEFUL AS EVENTS UNFOLD IN SOUTH AFRICA.

13. OF ULTIMATE IMPORTANCE THE US MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE  
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INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS IN A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A DEMOCRATIC  
WORLD POWER AND AN UNREPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT OF A TINY,  
ECONOMICALLY ENVIABLE AND BACKWARD COUNTRY MAY MILITATE AGAINST

THE FULFILLMENT OF US POLICY. REGARDLESS OF US ACTIONS, LESOTHO  
MAY CHART ITS OWN COURSE. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, EVENTS IN  
SOUTHERN AFRICA, WHOLLY BEYOND THE CONTROL OF LESOTHO, WILL BE  
THE ULTIMATE DETERMINANT OF LESOTHO'S DESTINY. THEREFORE, US  
POLICY AND RESOURCES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARD PROTECTING AND  
PROMOTING US INTEREST IN PEACEFUL AND RAPID CHANGE TO MAJORITY  
RULE IN SOUTH AFRICA, RHODESIA, AND NAMIBIA.  
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